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St. JOHN's Teſt of *knowing Chriſt*, and being *born of him*.

A

SERMON

Preached at

St. *Paul*'s Cathedral in *London*.

OCTOBER 14. 1739.

Deſigned as a Support to *good Chriſtians* againſt the Diſcouragements of ſome New Enthuſiaſts.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

1 JOHN II. 3.

Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his Commandments.

THESE Words (together with great Part of the Epiſtle from whence they are taken) are levelled by the Apoſtle againſt the Sect of the *Nicolaitans*, whoſe *Deeds* and *Doctrines* Chriſt, in the Epiſtles which he orders the ſame Apoſtle to write to the Churches of *Epheſus* and *Pergamus*, declares that he hates. A Sect which (from whomſoever they received their Name) were certainly a moſt abominable one. They boaſted, it ſeems, of I don't know what *Knowledge* and *Love* they had, beyond other Men, of God and of Chriſt: And in this Knowledge they placed the whole of Religion, without bearing any Regard or Eſteem whatever to a holy, religious or moral Life. But arrogantly confiding in their ſuppoſed *profound Knowledge* of *Myſteries* and *Secrets*, Rev. ii. 6, 15.

which they pretended were revealed peculiarly to *them*; they aſſumed the Title of *God's Elect*, his *Favourites* and *Sons*; and looking upon themſelves as above all Law, and exempt from all Rules; they called their Lewdneſſes and Debaucheries *Holy Communions*; and whatever Laſciviouſneſs or Impurities they ſhould commit, they were ſure nothing could be imputed to *them as Sin* (*a*).

To prevent ſuch helliſh Doctrines and Practices from ſpreading in the Church, the Apoſtle ſets himſelf thro' this whole Epiſtle to repreſent *God* in his true Nature. And after a ſhort Introduction, thus he begins:

ch. i. 5. *This is the Meſſage* [or this is the Declaration] *which we have heard of him*, (i. e. from Chriſt) *and declare* [again] *unto you, that God is Light* (i. e. pure as the Light) *and in him*
ver. 6. *is no Darkneſs* (no Impurity) *at all. If we ſay that we have Fellowſhip with him, and walk in Darkneſs* [or Uncleanneſs] *we lie and*
ver. 8. *do not the Truth. If we ſay that we have no Sin, we deceive ourſelves, and the Truth is*
ch. ii. 4. *not in us. He that ſaith, I know him, and keepeth not his Commandments, is a Liar him-*
ch. i. 10. *ſelf, and maketh God a Liar* too: *i. e.* he directly giveth God the Lie. For *he that*
ch. iii. 8. *committeth Sin*, is *not of God*, but *of the*

(*a*) *Clem. Alex. Strom.* 2. p. 401. and *Strom.* 3. p. 436. and *Epiphan. Hæreſ.* 25.

Devil.

Devil. And therefore *whatever Knowledge* ſuch a one may *vaunt* of Chriſt, it is evident that he *really* knows him *not.* For *whoſoever ſinneth, hath not ſeen him, neither known him.* *Hereby* (ſaith he) *i. e. Hereby* ONLY *we do know that we know him, if we keep his Commandments.* By this we may be *aſſured* that we *indeed* know Chriſt, and that he *does* and *will* know us: We are *ſure* that we have *his Spirit* to aſſiſt us here; and we are *ſure* that he *will receive us to himſelf* hereafter. ver. 6. ch. iv. 12, 13. John xiv. 3.

But that we may fully underſtand the Words, and duly improve them, I ſhall explain and diſcourſe of them in the manner following.

I. FIRST, I ſhall ſhew what the Apoſtle means by *knowing Chriſt.*

II. SECONDLY, I ſhall enquire, what *means* he directs to, for the *attaining* ſuch Knowledge.

I. FIRST, I muſt ſhew what the Apoſtle means by *knowing Chriſt.* For there are various and different Manners of knowing him, mentioned in Scripture. There is a Knowledge of him, which even the *Devils* have: *I know thee who thou art* (ſaith one of them) *the Holy One of God. Others alſo came out of many which they had poſſeſſed, crying out,* Luke iv. 34. ver. 41.

and ſaying, Thou art Chriſt the Son of God. But our Saviour rebuked them, and would not ſuffer them to ſpeak, becauſe *they knew he was Chriſt.* They knew him not as a Saviour, but as a Judge; and therefore our Lord would receive none of their Confeſſion, becauſe it proceeded not from Choice but Neceſſity. Inſtead of reviving their Hopes, his Appearance amongſt them but increaſed their Deſpair: they had nothing to expect from him but Indignation and Wrath: And therefore their knowing him could not but throw them into Horror and Confuſion.

A *diſmal* Conſequence this of *knowing him!* Though the Knowledge which *Men*, that are *wicked*, have of *him*, is attended with no better. And therefore their Knowledge alſo is very far different from that intended in my Text: For the *Knowledge* Saint *John* ſpeaks of, he mentions as *deſirable. Hereby* (ſaith he) *We do* KNOW *that we know him:* —— He ſpeaks of it, you ſee, as of a Knowledge, which they were very glad to attain. And with good Reaſon might he do ſo, as we ſhall perceive, if we look back upon the two Verſes preceding my Text. *My little Children, theſe things write I unto you, that ye ſin not*, i. e. that ye do not, like theſe Boaſters, live in any *Habit* of Sin; or *wilfully* commit any one *ſingle Act* of Sin:

Sin: *But if any* MAN *ſin* through Inadvertency or Surprize, or for any Time paſt has lived in Sin, but now ſincerely repents and amends his Life, *we have an Advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the Righteous: And he* (in ſuch Caſes) *is the Propitiation for our Sins; and not for ours only, but alſo for the Sins of the whole World:* i. e. of all that lay hold on him by Faith and Repentance. And then immediately follows my Text—*And hereby we* DO KNOW *that we know him*, i. e. we don't vainly and impiouſly boaſt, but we ASSUREDLY *know* that he is an *Advocate* for *us*, a *Propitiation* for our *paſt Sins*, and not only ſo, but alſo for our *future Slips* and *Failings*, provided we be careful, to the utmoſt of our Power, to *keep his Commandments*.

So that to *know Chriſt*, in the Apoſtle's Senſe, is not only to *know* that Chriſt is the *Advocate*, and *Propitiation for the Sins of all that repent*; but to know alſo *aſſuredly*, that if we perſevere in the State we are in, he is *our* Advocate, and *our* Propitiation; that we are of the happy Number of thoſe for whom he prays and intercedes, and of thoſe whom, in Conſequence of his Interceſſion, his Father looks upon as *intereſted* in him, as *Members* of him, united WITH him, and IN him. And ſo the Apoſtle ſeveral Times explains himſelf in this very

Epiſtle: In the Verſe next but one to my
ver. 5. Text——*Hereby* (ſaith he) *know we that we are* IN *him.* And ſo in the next Chapter——
c. iii. 24. *He that keepeth the Commandments dwelleth* IN *Chriſt, and Chriſt* IN *him: And hereby we know that he abideth* IN *us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.* And ſo again in the 4th Chapter——*Hereby know we, that we dwell* IN *him, and he* IN *us, becauſe he hath given us of his Spirit.* By the Communication and Influence of which Holy Spirit, we ſhall farther know that we are BORN *of him*, which is another Phraſe which St. *John* uſes
c. ii. 29. to expreſs this State: BORN *of him*, i. e.
iii. 9. of Chriſt, and *born of God: whoſe Seed*, he
v. 18. aſſures us, *remaineth* in every one that is ſo born, to preſerve *him from Sin*, and to be a perpetual Spring and Principle within him, of a new, holy and ſpiritual Life: Agreeable
2 Cor. v. to what another Apoſtle ſaith, *If any Man be*
17. *in Chriſt, he is a new Creature:* i. e. A true Chriſtian renounces all the carnal Deeds of the *old* Man, and lives up to that *new* Evangelical Law, which Chriſt introduced; which is the only Teſt whereby we can *know that we know Chriſt*, that we are *born of him*, and *abide in him* *: As will appear from my

II. SECOND

* The Reverend Mr. *Whitefield* in his Sermon on this Text (viz. 2 *Cor.* v. 17.) makes it one of his principal Heads, to ſhew

II. SECOND Head, under which I am to enquire, what *Means* the Apoſtle preſcribes for the *attaining* ſuch Knowledge. And that my Text expreſly tells us, is *keeping the Commandments: Hereby we* DO KNOW, or are ſure, *that we know him*, IF WE KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS.

But to ſpeak diſtinctly to this 2d Head, I muſt ſubdivide it into two Particulars: And enquire

Firſt, *Who* may be ſaid in the Apoſtle's Senſe, *to keep the Commandments:* And

Secondly, *What Aſſurance* or *Certainty* the keeping the Commandments will yield, that

ſhew "Why we muſt be new Creatures *ere* [i. e. *before*] we "can be in Chriſt." Whereas it is obvious that St. *Paul* means, that a Man's becoming *a new Creature*, is a *neceſſary Effect* of his *being in Chriſt*; and conſequently that he muſt *be in Chriſt*, *before* he can be *a new Creature*. If a Man could *new create himſelf*, or become *a new Creature* by his own Strength, *before* he was *in Chriſt*, he would be tempted to believe, he had but little need of Chriſt afterwards. Mr. *Whitefield*'s Arguments therefore on this Head could not be ſuggeſted by the *Holy Ghoſt*, becauſe he never ſuggeſts any thing that contradicts his own Word. Let Mr. *Whitefield* therefore take heed, what *Spirit* it is of which he boaſts he has *a double Portion given him* (*a*), and *in the Demonſtration* of which he tells us he ſpeaks (*b*), with *great Enlargements, and irreſiſtible Power* (*c*).

(*a*) Journal III. p. 15.
(*b*) *Ibid.* p. 13.
(*c*) *Ibid.* p. 24.

we

we are *born of God*, that we *know Chriſt*; that *He is in* US, and WE *in* HIM.

Firſt I ſhall enquire, *Who* may be ſaid to *keep the Commandments*; or what the *keeping his Commandments* implies? Does it mean an *abſolute* and *perfect* Obedience, and to *all* his Commands? If ſo; then are we never the nearer to the Knowledge of Chriſt as yet. For
Rom. x. 5. though *a Man which does thoſe Things ſhall live by them*; yet *who* is the Man, and *where* is he to be found, that ever thoroughly
Prov. xx. obſerved them? *Who can ſay, I have made*
9. *my Heart clean, I am pure from my Sin?* This is a Queſtion which the Wiſe-Man puts in one Place, and he himſelf anſwers it in
Eccleſ. vii. another. *There is not a juſt Man upon*
20. *Earth* (ſaith he) *that doth good, and ſinneth*
James iii. *not*. St. *James* affirms, that *in many things*
2. *we offend all*. And therefore, a few Verſes before my Text, St. *John* warns us, that
ch. i. 8. *if we ſay that we have no Sin, we deceive ourſelves, and the Truth is not in us*. And again,
ver. 10. *if we ſay, that we have not ſinned, we make God a Liar, and his Word is not in us*. From all which it follows, that an *abſolute* and *perfect* Obedience to God's Laws is not attainable in this Life; but that the beſt of Men, although they indulge not themſelves in any *Habit* of Sin; yet ſometimes offend, both in doing what they ought not, and alſo in omitting to do what they ought. And

even

even the beſt Actions of the beſt Man alive have, it is to be feared, ſome Allay of Infirmities and Imperfections in them.

All this is confeſſedly true; and yet St. *John*, in this very Epiſtle, as plainly tells us, that *He that committeth Sin, is of the Devil:* But that *whoſoever is born of God, doth not commit Sin; for his Seed* [the Seed of God] *remaineth in him; and he cannot ſin, becauſe he is born of God.* And again, *We know that whoſoever is born of God ſinneth not; but that he who is begotten of God keepeth himſelf, and that Wicked One toucheth him not.* From all which it follows, on the other Hand, that there is ſome *Meaſure* or *Degree* of Holineſs and Obedience by which *the Children of God are manifeſt*, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, from the *Children of the Devil.* And what that *Meaſure* or *Degree* is, is neceſſary to be ſhewn.

c. iii. 8, 9.

ch. v. 18.

ch. iii. 10.

Now there are three very obvious Qualifications or Requiſites with which ſuch Obedience muſt *neceſſarily* be attended; and with which *when* attended, we may humbly truſt, it will amount to that *keeping the Commandments* of God, which St. *John* means. And to each of theſe I ſhall ſpeak as briefly as I can.

In the firſt Place it muſt be *ſincere*, proceeding *from the Heart.* For this is neceſſary, even to the ſatisfying our ſelves, that our Obſervance of God's Commands pro-

ceeds from a lively *Faith* in God, and Love to him. For *human* Laws, or our own *Security*, our *Character* or *Reputation*, or perhaps our *natural Tempers* and *Inclinations*, may all, or either of them, frequently reſtrain our *outward* Actions, or prompt us to the exerting of ſome *outward* Behaviour, from which *Men* may think us honeſt and juſt: But a Man that acts only from ſuch Influences, and keeps God's Commandments from ſuch Motives, by no means *keeps them* in the Senſe of the Text. The *keeping the Commandments* which the Apoſtle means, is that on which the Pſalmiſt pronounces a Bleſſing.

Pſ. cxix. 2. *Bleſſed are they that keep his Teſtimonies, and ſeek him with their whole Heart.* For if this be not the Caſe; if the *Heart* ſuggeſt not the Virtue we pretend; or if it be not weaned from the Vice we forbear; we are but Deceivers of ourſelves, and Liars to God. An Action we muſt *abſtain from*, we muſt alſo *abhor*: what we ought not to *do*, we ought to *loath*. Since if our *Mind* hankers, where our *Hands* are withheld; we are but like a Lion chained, which, though tied up from doing Miſchief, retains his Lioniſh Diſpoſition ſtill.

And as thus our Obedience muſt be ſincere as to its *Principle*; ſo in the next Place muſt it be *regular* and *conſtant* in its *Practice*. For good Actions, exerted only now and then, by fits and ſtarts, are no Signs of

a *true*

a *true* Obedience, which muſt be *ſettled* and *reſolved*. It cannot indeed be expected that, whilſt we are in this State of human Weakneſs or Frailty, our Obedience ſhould never be interrupted, that it ſhould always go on evenly and ſmoothly, without any Fault: This I doubt is incompatible with our unglorified State: But ſtill ſo much is expected of a Chriſtian, as that he ſhould not only abſtain from living in the *Habit* of any Sin, but alſo from *wilfully* committing any *ſingle Act* of Sin. For ſo much at leaſt muſt be intended by the Apoſtle, when he tells us that *Whoſoever is born of God, does not commit Sin, and cannot ſin.* This certainly muſt mean that a Man that is *regenerate*, hath ſuch an inward Frame of Heart, ſuch a Diſpoſition of Soul, as renders any *ſingle* Act of Sin exceedingly odious and hateful to him. Inſomuch that if at any time he ſlips thro' Surprize, or Want of Attention, he immediately recollects and condemns himſelf for it: And recovering his Fall, he more attentively watches his Steps for the future: But being ſtill apprized of his own Weakneſs, he makes it a conſtant Petition in his Prayers, that when thro' Frailty he forgets God, God would in Mercy remember him: that as he often falls by the evil Inclination of his own Nature, he may always ſpeedily riſe again by the Help of his Grace. 1 John c. iii. 8, 9.

But

But thirdly, as the *keeping the Commandments*, which the Text intends muſt be ſincere and conſtant; ſo muſt it be *univerſal* alſo: *i. e.* One Commandment muſt be kept as well as another, and all of them as ſtrictly and religiouſly as one. For St. *James* tells us, that *whoſoever ſhall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one Point, he is guilty of all.* For as the *Man* is hurt, when only one Member of him is bruiſed or wounded; ſo by breaking of one Link of that Chain of Duties of which Religion conſiſts, the Law is violated. And therefore a Perſon that *ſo* offends is guilty of the Breach of the Law in general, notwithſtanding he ſhould obſerve all the reſt. For the Law is one univerſal Body, one perfect Rule of Righteouſneſs: and one and the ſame Law-Giver is the Author of it all: Whoſe Authority conſequently is infringed by the Breach of any one Part as well as of another. *For he that ſaid, Do not commit Adultery, ſaid alſo, Do not Kill: Now if thou commit no Adultery, yet if thou Kill, thou art become a Tranſgreſſor of the Law.*

James ii. 10.

ver. 11.

Nor muſt we content ourſelves with an uniform, univerſal Obſervance of his *moral* Precepts only; but muſt regularly and duly obey his *poſitive* Inſtitutions alſo. For whatever Delight ſome Men may take in comparing *poſitive* and *moral* Duties together, and in ſhewing how much one is preferable to the

the other, although both be required; and one as a neceſſary Means to the other; yet I am ſure that, ſo long as *Diſobedience* is itſelf an *Immorality*, they will find it a very difficult Taſk to prove any Man *moral*, that *diſobeys* the *poſitive* Commands of his Maker.

But farther ſtill: Not only the Obſervance of Chriſt's *ſtanding* Laws, but alſo a Compliance with his *extraordinary* Will, a patient Submiſſion to all manner of *Trials*, whenever he ſhall pleaſe to call us to them, muſt be included in what Saint *John* means by *keeping his Commandments*. The *young Man* in the Goſpel had kept ſo many of the *Ten* Commandments from his Youth, that Jeſus is ſaid, *when he beheld him*, to have *loved him*: And yet *the Lack of one thing*, the *not ſelling what he had and giving it to the Poor*, the *not taking up his Croſs and following our Lord*, when *He commanded*, but prizing his Riches more than Chriſt, kept him from being Chriſt's Diſciple. It is true, ſuch a *Self-Denial*, and total Reſignation of all a Man has, is not a Duty *ordinarily* incumbent upon *every* Chriſtian: But every Man, who, when *called* to it, *refuſes* it, is *not* a Chriſtian. For unleſs a Man, in the Courſe of his Obedience, gains ſuch an Aſcendant over his Paſſions, as to be ready, whenever Occaſion calls, to part with every thing for Chriſt's ſake, he is none of Chriſt's. He himſelf has given us to underſtand, that unleſs we be reſolute

Mark x. 17—22.

Mat. x. 37, 38. Luke xiv. 26, 27.

ſolute enough to forego every Relation and Bleſſing of this World, that thwarts or interferes with his Precepts and Commands; unleſs we can willingly and chearfully ſubmit to any Croſſes or Interruptions to our worldly Felicity; unleſs for his ſake we can poſtpone and renounce the neareſt and deareſt Relations in Life; yea, and lay down our own Lives alſo for his Honour and Glory; we are not to flatter ourſelves that we are his Diſciples; for ſuch he will never acknowledge us to be.

Thus qualified, therefore, muſt be that *keeping God's Commandments* which is intended in my Text: Which I choſe to ſet forth in its full Amplitude, that you may neither on the one Hand deceive yourſelves, by reſting contented with an inſufficient, imperfect Obedience; nor on the other Hand deſpond, when you have done ALL that your Duty requires you to do. To guard you more eſpecially againſt the laſt of which Miſtakes, I ſhall now proceed to enquire,

Secondly, What *Aſſurance* or *Certainty* the keeping God's Commandments yields, that we are *born of God*, that we *know Chriſt*, that HE is IN US, and WE IN HIM. To introduce me to this Particular, let me read a few Verſes of our Apoſtle's again: In the
ch. i. 7. firſt Chapter he tells us, that *if we walk in the Light, as he is in the Light, we have Fellowſhip one with another* (i. e. God with

us, and we with God,) *and the Blood of Jeſus Chriſt, his Son, cleanſeth us from all Sin.* In my Text, *Hereby* (ſaith he) *we* DO KNOW, *that we know him, if we keep his Commandments:* And in a Verſe or two after, *Whoſo keepeth his Word, in him verily is the Love of God perfected: Hereby* KNOW *we, that we are in him:* And in the laſt Verſe of this ſame Chapter, *If ye know, that he is righteous, ye know, that every one that doth Righteouſneſs, is born of him.* In the 3d Chapter, again, *Beloved, if our Heart condemn us not, then have we Confidence towards God: And whatſoever we aſk, we receive of him, becauſe we keep his Commandments, and do thoſe Things, that are pleaſing in his Sight.* And laſtly, in the 4th Chapter, *If we love one another,* (ſaith he, which he repreſents, as the Summit of Chriſtianity) *God* DWELLETH *in us, and his Love is* PERFECTED *in us.*

Compare the 3d verſe.

c. ii. 5.

ver. 29.

c. iii. 21, 22.

c. iv. 12.

Now, altho' it is confeſs'd, that the main Intention of the Apoſtle, in writing this Epiſtle, was to condemn the vain and impious Pretenſions of the *Nicolaitans,* and others, to *any* Knowledge of Chriſt; yet, what Words could have made it plainer, that St. *John* at the ſame Time allowed and aſſerted, that they who *walk in the Light,* who *keep the Commandments,* who *do Righteouſneſs,* and from thence have the Teſtimony of a *good Conſcience*; that theſe, I ſay, have an *infallible* Sign, that they *know Chriſt,* that they are

 cleans'd

cleans'd from their Sin, that they are *born of God*, that they *do thoſe Things which are pleaſing to God*, that *the Love of God is perfected in them*, that *He dwelleth in* THEM, and THEY *in* HIM? They, therefore, who are conſcious to themſelves, that they have *this* Teſt of their *knowing Chriſt*, and of their being *born of him*, which you ſee that ſame Apoſtle, who *explains* theſe Privileges, and who ſets himſelf to oppoſe all *falſe* Claims to them, admits, and pronounces the *only true one*; ——What farther Satisfaction would they have or deſire, that the Spirit of God dwells in their Hearts; and that it is the Motion of that Spirit, which enlivens and quickens their Hearts and Wills to God's Service, and a holy Converſation? *He that keepeth the Commandments, dwelleth in Chriſt, and Chriſt in him. And hereby we* KNOW, *that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.* For whenever we find ourſelves *inclined* to do, whatever we learn God *wills* us to do; we may conclude, it is the ſame Spirit, which *commands*, that *inclines:* And if ſo, we know again, that *as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God: The Spirit itſelf beareth Witneſs with our Spirit, that we are the Children of God: And if Children, then Heirs, Heirs of God, and joint Heirs with Chriſt.*

c. iii. 24.

Rom. viii. 14, 16, 17.

But this I ſpeak wholly upon Preſumption, that we ſtedfaſtly *perſevere* in our Obedi-

ence: For otherwiſe *Obedience*, or a *long Habit* of Obedience, gives no Security of Salvation. So long as a Man obeys, and leads a good Life, ſo long, be ſure, is he in a State of Salvation: *i. e.* he is aſſur'd, that if he continues to live as at preſent he does, and dies in the State he is at preſent in, he ſhall be finally ſav'd. But let his Faith be ever ſo ſtrong now, and his Practice ever ſo ſincere and uniform; yet no one *ſhould* be, becauſe no one *can* be, certain and ſecure, that he ſhall hold the ſame Faith, or continue the ſame Practice to his dying Day.

For with whatever Aſſurance ſome Teachers may tell you, that a Man, who (in *their* Language) has once *had a Call*, can never afterwards *fall from Grace*; *That* is a Doctrine which I dare not preach, becauſe I could never find it in my Bible. From thence, I think, I learn on the contrary, that, altho' by the beſt Uſe of Grace a Man can make, he can't poſſibly *merit* a Continuance of it *to* him; yet by the leaſt Slight or Neglect of Improving it, God may be provok'd to withdraw it *from* him. And, if *that* be the Caſe, inſtead of *receiving a full Reward*, the *call'd* Man *loſes* (as St. *John* ſpeaks) *the Things that he has wrought, and ſo labours in vain.* For, *when the Righteous turneth away from his Righteouſneſs, and committeth Iniquity, and doth according to all the Abominations which the wicked Man doth; ſhall he*

2 John 8.

Ezek. xviii. 24.

he live? No: *All the Righteouſneſs that he hath done ſhall not be mentioned: In his Treſpaſs that he hath treſpaſs'd, and in his Sin that he hath ſinn'd, in them ſhall he die. To be made Partakers of Chriſt*, we muſt *hold the Beginning of our Confidence ſtedfaſt unto the End.* And, even in the ſevereſt *Trials* and *Perſecutions*, our Lord *himſelf* tells us, that *He* only *that ſhall endure unto the End, ſhall be ſav'd.*

Heb. iii. 14.

Mat. xxiv. 13.

The Reſult then of the Whole is this: So long as a Man keeps the Commandments of God, ſincerely, conſtantly, wholly, and in every Reſpect that I have mention'd; ſo long is he ſure, that he hath a lively, ſaving Knowledge of Chriſt: He is *ſealed by the Spirit, the Earneſt of which, God hath given in his Heart:* Which if he cheriſhes, and continues to go on as at preſent he does, nothing remains but to die in Peace and enter into Glory.

Epheſ. iv. 30. 2 Cor. i. 22.

And, now, many and excellent are the Inferences that might be drawn from the Doctrine I have advanc'd. And, in the *firſt* Place, be ſure, it ought to be applied againſt the *Nicolaitans* of all Ages: Men who, pretending to be the *Favourites* of God, his *Choſen* and *Elect*, and to know the *Secrets* of the Divine Will, and to be privy to all his *hidden Decrees*; put on, indeed, *a Form of Godlineſs*, as to outward Show; but within, are full of Deceit and Uncleanneſs, which, like

like their Predeceſſors of old, they exert in the Practice of all Lewdneſs and Vice, and then are ſure, God can ſee no Spots in his Saints. Againſt theſe (if any ſuch there be at this Time) we might thunder, from the ſeveral Texts I had Occaſion to read in the Opening of my Diſcourſe: I might ſhow them to themſelves, and upon the Authority of St. *John*, boldly pronounce, *Whence* they *are*, and *What* they *be*. *He that committeth Sin*, (ſaith the Apoſtle) *is of the Devil:* And, *he that ſaith I know him, and keepeth not his Commandments, is a Liar, and the Truth is not in him.* c. iii. 8. c. ii. 4.

But this, however neceſſary as well as obvious Uſe, muſt be wav'd at preſent, in order to make Way for one of a very contrary Nature. Poſterity, ſure, will think, that we lived in a very pious Age, when they ſhall read, that our Preachers were forced to reſtrain the religious Heats of their People, and call to Order their Chriſtian Zeal. And yet it will *not* be an *unſeaſonable* Application of my Text, at this Time, if I take Occaſion to exhort all, who have that Teſt of their *knowing Chriſt*, which St. *John* here requires, to reſt *eaſy* and *contented* with it: And not to be troubled for the Want of thoſe high Raptures and *Feelings* of Joy, of thoſe extraordinary Manifeſtations of God to them, which ſome modern Enthuſiaſts pretend, that the Regenerate amongſt them experience, to the great Diſheartning of many

good Chriſtians, to the Puffing up of many *vain* ones *, to the Diſparagement of the Doctrine of *Divine Grace*, and to the Diſturbance of the *public Order* and *Peace* of the Church. For to what Uſe, I beſeech you, would ſuch Extaſies ſerve? Suppoſe a Man ſhould, for once, hear a *Voice from Heaven*, or ſee a *Viſion* from thence, certifying him how much he was in Favour with God; yet ſtill, methinks, it would be more deſirable to have always an Aſſurance of

* Mr. *Whitefield* tells us, that "He learned the Nature "of *true Chriſtianity*, and *the Neceſſity of the New Birth*, "from a Book entitled, *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*, "[which Book contains at the End of it, a ſhort *Account* "*of a ſpiritual Life*,] *a Book*, he ſays *(e)*, *worth its Weight in* "*Gold*." And, indeed, if here and there it be read with Caution, it cannot well be over-valued: The following Paſſage, I am ſure, cannot be conſidered too often, or too attentively, by Mr. *Whitefield* himſelf. "As all, who follow "a ſpiritual Life, muſt be well inſtructed in the Nature and "Meaſure of—*affectionate Sufferings*; ſo they are no leſs to "conſider well, the *Joys* and *Comforts* they find ſpringing up "in their Souls. This is as important a Caution, as any in "the whole Courſe of a ſpiritual Life: For ſome coming "to feel many of theſe *inward Viſits*, as they *think* them, "from thence judge, they have made great Advances in "their Way to God; at length, come to ſwell hugely in "their own Conceits, imagining themſelves Men of *ſeraphi-* "*cal Devotion*: This carries them to contemn, and ſepa- "rate from, others, whom they imagine leſs holy; nay, and "will lead them to imagine, that they have ſtrange *new* "*Lights* communicated to them from the *Father of Lights*; "and every Conceit they take up, when in theſe Heats of "Temper, they imagine to be of God, and give it out as "ſuch to others *(f)*."

(e) See Mr. Whitefield's *Account of himſelf, in the* Weekly Miſcellany *for* May 12, 1739. *(f) Bp.* Burnet's *Edition*, 8vo, 1707, *p.* 115, 116.

of the ſame, from within, ariſing from the Bottom of one's own Breaſt, in the real and internal Impreſſions we feel of a Godlike Nature on our own Souls: It would be much more deſirable, I ſay, to ſee and know, that our own Will is crucified, our carnal and animal Life ſubdued, and that a Divine Life is riſen up in its Stead: For this is not only a *ſure Pledge*, but is itſelf the *Beginning* of Happineſs and Heaven; the very Eſſence of which conſiſts in a perfect Conformity of all the Powers of our Souls, with the Will of God.

Do not, therefore, (as a great Ornament of our Church ſpeaks *, alluding to what St. *Paul* ſays concerning *the Righteouſneſs of Faith:*) " Do not (ſays he) ſeek after " an Oracle, or immediate Revelation, or ex- " pect that a Voice from Heaven ſhould aſ- " ſure thee, that thou art a true Believer, " and a ſincere Penitent, art in a State of " Grace and Favour with God; for the Re- " ſolution of the Caſe is *nigh unto thee*, and " even *within thee*, and to be ſought after " no further, than in thine own Heart and " Conſcience. If thou perceiveſt, that thou " doſt believe in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, with " all thine Heart, with a Faith working by

 " Love,

* Bp. *Bull*'s Diſcourſe on *the Teſtimony of the Spirit of God in the Faithful*, in his *Engliſh* Works, Vol. III. p. 883, 834. I heartily recommend that whole Diſcourſe to my Reader, in which he will find the chief Doctrines of the *Methodiſts* obviated, and very handſomely expos'd.

" Love, Love to God, and Love to thy " Neighbour; thou mayeſt as certainly con- " clude, thou art in a State of Salvation, as " if a Voice from Heaven had told thee " ſo."

We deny not, but grant, that the Spirit of God may ſometimes, as he ſees there is Occaſion, ſtrike the Mind of good Chriſtians with a ſudden Joy, enlightning their Underſtandings, diſpelling their Clouds, enlivening their Affections, and enabling them to *diſcern* the Graces of God ſhining in their Brightneſs, and acting vigorouſly on their Souls. But theſe are Operations, which are only tranſient and occaſional, neither vouchſafed, nor needful to *all* Men, nor to *any* Man at *all Times.*

On the contrary, we often meet with Chriſtians of *great Piety*, though of great Diffidence, that have the Fruits of the Spirit flouriſhing in them, but yet receive no *Satisfaction* from thence, becauſe they do not *perceive* and *diſcern* them *. And what would our new Teachers have us ſay to ſuch Men? Would they have us tell them, that if they *feel not* the Spirit, it is a plain Sign they are *deſerted* of it; and ſo throw them into Deſpair? Far be it from us! As to myſelf, I muſt own, ſhould I meet with ſuch a Chriſtian, I would endeavour to encourage him: I would remind him, that the Sun, when

* See Bp. *Bull*, as before, p. 893—6.

when it is riſen upon the Earth, does not always ſhine out in its full Brightneſs; but is ſometimes overcaſt with Clouds, and hidden from our Sight: But even then, it affords us ſo much Light, as that we may chearfully perform the Works of the Day. And juſt ſo I would tell him, that the Spirit of God may be within him, and yet he himſelf not always be affected with Livelineſs and Joy: He may ſometimes, very probably, be overcaſt with Fears and Miſtruſts; yet ſtill it will enable him to diſtinguiſh himſelf from the Children of Darkneſs, and to manifeſt him, by his Works, to be a Child of Light. The *not feeling* the Spirit therefore, ſhould render no Man diſconſolate, ſo long as he produces *the Fruits of the Spirit*, which no Man can do, who has not the Spirit dwelling in him.

Let me, then, exhort you, not to be diſmayed, nor to heed them, if any rapturous Enthuſiaſts preach up, I know not what unaccountable Senſation, violent Emotion, and ſudden Change, which a Man muſt feel, when he becomes regenerate, or is firſt adopted for a Child of God *. For ſuch ſenſible Emotions,

* There is a very good Admonition to this Purpoſe, in Mr. *Whitefield*'s fore-cited golden Book. " None are to mea-
" ſure their firſt Regeneration, either by the Vehemence, or
" by the Continuance of their Sorrow, but by the Effects it
" produceth. If it makes them hate Sin, ſo as moſt care-
" fully

motions, a Man, who was regenerated by Baptiſm in his Infancy, and was religiouſly brought up, and has led a regular Chriſtian Life from his Cradle, will very probably never experience. A Man, indeed, that is *reclaimed* from a *bad* Life, and ſeriouſly and reſolutely enters upon a *new* one, may, very likely, at firſt, perceive ſome Tranſports of *Joy* for his *happy* Change: But to a Man uniformly religious, and devout from his Youth, the Spirit ſpeaks, as the Lord did to *Elijah*, neither in *ſtrong Winds*, nor in *Earthquakes*, nor in *Fire*, but in a *ſtill, ſmall Voice*.

1 Kings xix. 11, 12.

As to the Broachers of theſe Doctrines, ſhould any bear them Record, that they *have a Zeal of God*, I would not ſet myſelf to conteſt it with them: But we have abundant Reaſon to think, it is *not according to Knowledge*. For whatever Aſſurances they may have *within* them, to ſatisfy *themſelves*, that they are *born of God*, and *ſpeak*, and *act by the Holy Spirit*; it is apparent, that they give but very indifferent *outward* Proofs to convince *others*, that *God is in them of a Truth*.

" fully to guard againſt it; if it makes them hate themſelves, ſo as to become denied to all Self-Pleaſure and Self-Will, and reſign'd to the Will of God; they are not to be ſcrupulous about any Thing further, but to examine theſe carefully *(g)*."

(g) Bp. Burnet's *Edition*, 8vo, 1707, p. 113.

Truth. For the repreſenting the ACTS of one only amongſt them, as of greater Luſtre than the *Acts* of all the *Apoſtles* together; the aſſuming to themſelves, upon all Occaſions, the peculiar *Language of the Holy Ghoſt*; the equalling themſelves in every Thing they do, and in every trivial Civility done to them, to *Prophets* and *Apoſtles*; the boaſting of *immediate Inſpirations*, and *extraordinary Communications* with God, and in Proof of it, laying a blaſphemous Claim to *greater Miracles* than ever were perform'd by our Bleſſed Saviour *himſelf*; * the breaking

* Any one that has read Mr. *Whitefield*'s *Journals*, will want no Proofs of what I have here charg'd upon him. But becauſe any one, who has *not* read them, may be apt to think I aggravate in what I ſay concerning his Pretenſion to Miracles, I ſhall here cite ſome of his own Words, out of the laſt *Continuation of his Journal*. "They deſire to "know (ſays he) by what Authority we preach; and aſk, "*What Sign ſhoweſt thou, that thou doſt theſe Things?* But, "alas! what further Sign would they require? We went not "into the Fields, till we were excluded the Churches: And "has not God ſet his Seal to our Miniſtry in an extraordi-"nary Manner? Have not many, that were ſpiritually *blind*, "*received their Sight?* Many that have been *lame*, *ſtrength-"ened* to run the Way of God's Commandments? Have not "the *Deaf heard?* The *Lepers been cleanſed?* The *Dead* "*raiſed?* And the *Poor had the Goſpel preached unto them?* "☞ That theſe *notable Miracles* have been wrought, not "in our own Names, or by our own Power, but in the "Name and by the Power of Jeſus of *Nazareth*, cannot be "denied. And yet they require a Sign? *But verily there* "*ſhall no other Sign be given to this evil and adulterous Gene-"ration (b).*"—Again in his Letter to the Lord Bp. of *Glouceſter*,

(b) Journal IV. p. 10, 11.

ing by Force into *other Mens Lines*, there inviting and gathering tumultuous Aſſemblies, turning *Accuſers of their Brethren*, and diſſuading their People from attending to the Inſtructions of thoſe, whom the ſacred Wri-
Heb. xiii. 17. ters bid them *to obey, thoſe who have* regularly *the Rule over them*, thoſe who *watch for their Souls*,

ceſter, — " Saith the Dr. [Dr. *Stebbing*,] " Theſe Men have no " *Proof* to offer for *their* inward Manifeſtations :" What Proof, " my Lord, does the Dr. require ? Would he have us raiſe " dead Bodies ? Have we not done greater Things than " theſe ? I ſpeak with all Humility : Has not God, by our " Miniſtry raiſed many dead Souls to a ſpiritual Life ? — " Verily, if Men will not believe the Evidence God has " given that he ſent us; neither would they believe, tho' " one roſe from the Dead *(i)*." Was there ever ſuch a Medley of Vanity, and Nonſenſe, and Blaſphemy jumbl'd together ? Dr. *Stebbing* had obſerv'd that the Apoſtles wrought *Miracles*, as an *Evidence*, that what they ſpake, they ſpake from God : Whereas " theſe Men (ſaith he) meaning the " *Methodiſts*, have *no Proof* to offer for *their* inward Mani- " feſtations, unleſs their own confident Aſſertions may be " admitted as ſuch *(k)*." And in anſwer to this, Mr. *Whitefield* appeals to his *raiſing dead Souls to a ſpiritual Life*, which he tells you is a *greater* Miracle than the *raiſing dead Bodies* to a natural Life. But did our Saviour or his Apoſtles (when they were call'd upon for their Credentials) ever appeal to the inward Effects, they wrought upon Mens Souls by their *ſpiritual Cures?* No : But, ſaith our Saviour,—*I have*
John. v, 36. *greater Witneſs than that of John: The Works which the Father has*
c. x. 37. *given me to finiſh; the ſame Works that I do, bear Witneſs of me,*
38. *that my Father hath ſent me. If I do not the Works of my Father, believe me not: But if I do; tho' ye believe not me, believe the Works; that ye may know and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.* St. *Peter*, we know, by preaching one Sermon, con-

(i.) Journal IV. p. 19. *(k)* Caution againſt Religious Deluſion, p. 10.

Souls, as *they that muſt give Account of them* to God; — All theſe Things ſeem rather to ſhow, that they *themſelves are not aware what Manner of Spirit it is, that they are of.* It is *not the Spirit of God*, for certain: For *God is not the Author of Confuſion* (or as the Margin has it, *of Tumult or Unquietneſs,) but the God of Peace, as in all Churches of the Saints.*

Luke ix. 55.

1 Cor. xiv. 33.

But whatever Diſtaſte they may endeavour to give you, with Relation to your true and proper

converted *about* 3000 *Souls* to the Church: But we no where find that he call'd this *a notable Miracle*. *Miracles* are Appeals to our *outward* Senſes: Things beyond the Power of ordinary Nature, done openly in the Sight of the World. Let Mr. *Whitefield* do any Thing of this Kind, and we will liſten to, and attend him. But, whilſt he imagines that, all that come to gaze at him, go away his Diſciples, his *Vanity* will ſurprize us more than his *Works*. I ſhall, however, tranſcribe another Paragraph from his favourite Author, for his Peruſal and Meditation.

Acts ii. 41.

" All this gives no Warrant for Men, upon the Pretence " of Inſpirations, to make void the Laws of God and Men " at their Pleaſure. For if all Men muſt be left to this " their pretended Freedom, and be permitted to act ac- " cordingly; every bold Impoſtor, or hot-brain'd Enthuſiaſt, " may vouch God, and then do what he will. When we " are carried to do any Thing, which is beyond the com- " mon Duties of Mankind, and extraordinary; then we are " not to go upon an inward Motion of the Spirit. For " no other Body is bound to believe or acknowledge it: " And therefore, tho' the inward Leadings of the Spirit " may ſatisfy *ourſelves*, becauſe perceiv'd by *us*; yet, be- " fore we propoſe theſe to *others*, we muſt have ſome other " Arguments to make them good by: Nobody being bound " to receive theſe, barely upon our own Aſſertion *(l)*."

(l) Pag. 130.

proper Guides; let them not by any Means put you out of Conceit with yourſelves. But whenever they tell you, that " a Man who " conſtantly attends on the Means of Grace, " who is exact in his Morals, humane and " courteous in his Converſation, who gives " much in Alms, and is frequent in private " Duties; that ſuch a Man can be as deſti- " tute of any ſaving experimental Know- " ledge of Jeſus Chriſt, as thoſe upon whom " his Name was never call'd, and who ſtill " ſit in Darkneſs and the Shadow of Death;" and this only, becauſe he has not that fanciful Experience of the New-Birth, which they themſelves can neither explain nor underſtand; whenever, I ſay, they preach or publiſh any Thing like this *, I beſeech

* See Mr. *Whitefield*, Journal III. p. 81, 82. Mr. *Whitefield*, (to vindicate the Paſſage here cited from his third Journal) writes to the Lord Bp. of *Glouceſter*, as follows. " He [Dr. *Stebbing*] ſays — I ſuppoſe Mr. *Benjamin Seward* " to be a Perſon *believing in Chriſt, and blameleſs in his Con-* " *verſation*, before what I call his Converſion. — But this is " a direct Untruth. — For it was thro' the Want of a *living* " *Faith in Jeſus Chriſt*, which he now has, that he was not " a Chriſtian before, but a mere Moraliſt. Your Lordſhip " knows that our Article ſays, " Works done without the Spi- " rit of God, and true Faith in Jeſus Chriſt, have the Nature " of Sin." And ſuch were all the Works done by Mr. *Ben-* " *jamin Seward*, before the Time mentioned in my Jour- " nal *(m)*." But if Mr. *Seward* had *no Faith in Chriſt*, what induc'd *him* to *attend ſo conſtantly on the Means of Grace?* And if

(m) Journal IV. p. 19.

ſeech you, my Brethren, mind them not: But turn again to St. *John*, a much greater Divine, and take his Word before them all. His Inſtruction is this, and with it I ſhall conclude, *Little Children*, (ſaith he) *Let no Man deceive you: He that* DOTH *Righteouſneſs*, IS *righteous, even as he is righteous.* And --- *If ye know that he is righteous; ye know, that every one that* DOTH *Righteouſneſs*, IS BORN OF HIM. 1 John iii. 7. c. iii. 29.

if his Faith was not a *living* one, how came it to be productive of ſuch *Exactneſs in his Morals*, ſuch *Humanity* and *Courteouſneſs* in his *Converſation*, ſuch *Liberality* in *Almſ-giving*, and ſuch a *frequent* Performance of *private Duties*, as Mr. *Whitefield* witneſſes of him? If Mr. *Whitefield*'s own Report of Mr. *Seward*, be a true one; I will venture to affirm, that he was in a much ſafer Way, before he became acquainted with Mr. *Whitefield*, than he was afterwards!; and that he was not ſo properly *converted*, as *perverted*, to Methodiſm.

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